

## Southeast Region

## Hurricane Katrina Report

September 10-13, 2005



The Incident Management Team, based in Lacombe, Louisiana at Big Branch NWR, continues to assist in community service activities, including debris clean up around public sites, such as schools, hospitals, police departments and court houses. Over 200 Service employees have been deployed within the various missions in which our agency is participating, including 70 that are assigned to FEMA missions. Approximately 150 of those employees are based at the Lacombe facility.



*Dan Parker inspects pumps at Bayou Sauvage. Two of four pumps survived the flood. Pumping out 72,000 gallons of water per minute to help reduce flooding at Bayou Sauvage and New Orleans East.*

The Service continues to provide support (food, water, fuel, a safe place for the night) to local police and fire departments, as well as 100 American Red Cross and International Red Cross volunteers, National Guard Servicemen, Immigration and Customs personnel, 40 FEMA personnel, and other law enforcement officers engaged in the search and rescue efforts in New Orleans and throughout the impact area. On Saturday, this facility provided more than 1,350 meals, of which 200 meals were sent to support a local hospital. Doctors from the hospital expressed gratitude for the opportunity to eat a hot meal. More than 100 loads of laundry were processed and 350 showers were taken at the Lacombe facility.



*Rail at Bayou Sauvage NWR.*

Wildfire continues to be a major concern for surrounding areas. Service fire personnel continue to assess the potential for fire, clear up fire breaks, and prepare equipment and manpower to respond to fires. On Saturday, we responded to two fires. The first occurred at Bayou Sauvage NWR covering a two-acre area. It was contained within a quarter mile of the pump station. There was great concern about the fuel on site to run the pumps and the massive amount of debris along the dike. A FEMA Type 1 helicopter conducted 30 water drops, which was of great assistance to the Service's fire crew. The second fire was within 400 feet of the Lacombe NWR boundary, but the Lacombe Fire Department was able to contain it to a quarter acre.

From day one, Refuge Law Enforcement Officers have continued to make a positive difference in community service activities by participating in search and rescue operations, ensuring security for those involved in the relief efforts and escorting employees obtaining supplies. Agents from the Service's Office of Law Enforcement, as well as Refuge Law Enforcement Officers from various areas of the country, began to arrive in the New Orleans area Saturday. By Monday, approximately 30 officers and their watercraft were based at the New Orleans Saints practice field in Metairie as they assisted in search and recovery missions.

### Outreach

The Service's Public Information Officers are on the ground handling media relations in the impacted states and through the Regional Office. Media outlets that have either published or broadcast stories or are planning to do so include the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *CNN*, *MSNBC*, *CQ*, *National Geographic*, *C-Span*, *NPR* and others.

Our Congressional Affairs staff is working with a Member of Congress in addition to Senate and House Appropriations Committee staff and staff from the state delegations to give them an opportunity to see first-hand the damage left in Katrina's wake to Service facilities, and equally important, the work which we are doing to support our local communities.

The watercraft search and rescue operation based at the Mandalay NWR in Houma, Louisiana continued their search and rescue efforts. The St. Bernard Parish Search and Rescue requested four crews to provide boat transportation to the California Task Force 6 and the National Guard. More than 50 homes and house trailers were searched resulting in the evacuation of a couple who had been in their home for 11 days. The other four crews from Mandalay were dispatched through FEMA to assist California Task Force 1, 2, and 3 in an area north of the FEMA command post in Metairie where 42 houses were cleared.

Citizens from the local community have been requesting assistance from our road and chainsaw crew for areas that have not yet been cleared. In some areas, the debris is so extensive that driveways and houses are not easily seen.

The team leader was approached by a man requesting assistance with clearing his driveway so that an ambulance could transport his wife home from the hospital. Within one hour of his request,

a crew was dispatched to clear his driveway. Another request involved clearing a long driveway with debris so extensive that it took our crew an hour and a half to clear.

Pumps draining water from Bayou Sauvage NWR continue to run. The Department of Transportation has requested the removal of water from the sections of Interstate 10 and Highway 90 that cross the refuge.

On Monday, the Service's Regional Director Sam Hamilton, Deputy Regional Director Cindy Dohner and Chief of Law Enforcement Jim Gale began a tour of the impacted areas to assess the damage and observe the ongoing community service activities. They will meet with several Service employees currently living in trailers at Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR and Big Branch NWR because their homes were destroyed.

### **Additional information**

Media contact coordination is being handled by the Regional Office of External Affairs 404/679 7287.